Giselle Valdes

Mr. Ross

Period 5

14 October 2013

4. *There is only one correct way to interpret the Bible.*

Throughout countless century and millennia the interpretation of the bible has been, and remains, a subject of much debate. This is evident in the various branches of religion that have resulted of these conflicts, all interpreting the same text in greatly differing manners. For instance, Jehovah’s Witnesses have a completely different interpretation of the exact same texts that Christians use as their source of knowledge on their faith. This difference is evidently great enough to have incited a complete break from Christianity, not even the formation of yet another unique denomination underneath the same faith. For instance, Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that you still have an opportunity to attain salvation after death, whilst in Christianity you solely have the duration of your eternal life in order to prove your worthiness of achieving salvation. This belief in a “second chance” completely undermines the need to do good in this life, as is so enforced by Christianity, and therefore leaves us humans with an open door to sin and to succumb to acts of wrong in this life. It is truly mystifying to see how two beliefs, both originating from the bible, may lead to opposing faiths that may even serve to undermine one another. Another major controversy in the interpretation of the bible is whether one is to interpret it literally or symbolically. In the Old Testament there are many stories through which a valuable lesson pertaining to faith is taught. Many of these are rather unlikely events not viewed as probable in modern times, therefore leading many to rather interpret them as symbolic tales through which a message is expressed. On the contrary, those whom literally interpret the bible never dare to question or even doubt the possibility of these events actually taking place due to the infinite reaches of the miracles of God that may make it possible. One commonly disputed example would be that of the story of Jonah and the whale. Many believe that such a tale is highly unlikely and that it was a symbolic tale used to teach us of the opportunity to attain redemption and propagate the word of the Lord, despite all obstacles. Meanwhile, many viewed this as a true event that emphasized the extent to which our Lord’s miraculous and great power over our natural world was able to reach, and likely even beyond so. All in all, there is likely never to be determined one set and true manner in which one may interpret the bible. As time progresses, so shall our ideas, and whilst many expressed in the bible may, in the opinion of some, no longer hold true, others have perpetuated aspects of our existence far beyond our possible comprehension. This may lead to the creation of certain commonly held views of the meaning of the Bible, whilst some rarely touched upon topics may still be open for dispute. When looking to the future, who knows how many more interpretations of the very same Bible may arise, leading to further formation of denominations in our church or an even more intense break, as with the Jehovah’s witnesses.